Who Am I?

Destructive Insects in Alabama's Forests

A) I'm brown to black and only 1/8 inch long. My hind end is rounded, in contrast to the scooped-out posterior of Ips beetles.
I may be smaller than a grain of rice, but I am the most destructive forest insect in the South. I attack pine trees of all sizes, but usually infest trees larger than 6 inches in diameter first. Trees weakened by flooding, windstorms, and especially drought are my favorites.

Southern Forest Insect Work Conference Archive, forestryimages.org

Tim Tigner, Virginia Dept of Forestry, Bugwood.org

J.R. Baker & S.B. Bambara, North Carolina State University, Bugwood.org

Timothy Haley, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org

B) I'm easily recognized by my scooped-out rear end that is surrounded by spines. I'm black to reddish-brown and may vary in size from 3/32 to 1/4 inch in length. Adults not fully mature and found under the bark are usually yellowish to light brown.
Trees I've infested usually have numerous white to reddish-brown pitch tubes on the bark, about the size of a wad of gum. In trees of low vigor, pitch tubes may be lacking and the earliest signs will be reddish boring dust in the bark crevices at the tree's base.

C) As an adult beetle, I measure 1/4 to 3/8 inch long. I'm dark brown or black. I can easily be confused with Ips bark beetles, but I'm larger with a heavy body, and my posterior is not scooped out.
Signs of my handy work are the pitch tubes on the lower trunk and stumps, usually on the lower 3 to 8 feet of the tree. Tubes are large – sometimes about the size of a walnut – and white to reddish. Older tubes have a sugar-like texture. Foliage color is not a satisfactory indicator, since large infestations may develop before any trees are killed or foliage turns brown.

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D) I am a major pest of red oaks, accounting for millions of dollars in losses from defects and degrade in lumber. My antennae are very long, almost doubling my 1-inch (25 mm) body length. My rust-brown color blends well with the bark surface, and I am rarely seen. The first signs of my attack resemble the fine frass produced by ambrosia beetles. As the larvae bore into the tree, sap begins to extrude from the attack points. Within the tree, tunnel diameters gradually increase from pinhole size to about 1/2-inch.

(Answers are located on page 31)